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Between Archive and Repertoire:

Astley's Amphitheatre, Early Circus and Romantic-Era Song Culture¹

The front page of the Friday, September 29, 1797 edition of the *Morning Herald* begins with advertisements for the plays featured at the two patent theatres in the nation's capital later that night. At the Theatre-Royal, Covent Garden, audiences could enjoy *The Castle of Andalusia* along with *The Honest Thieves*, while those who attended the Theatre-Royal, Drury Lane would be treated to *The Wheel of Fortune* and *The Children in the Wood*. Underneath the relatively plain notices for these plays at the legitimate theatres appears a much more elaborate description of the bill of fare for the "Last Two Nights" of entertainments at Astley's Royal Amphitheatre, the establishment acknowledged to be the first modern circus.² Owned and managed by Phillip Astley,

¹ The research for this project was supported by grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and Simon Fraser University's Digital Humanities Innovation Lab. I would like to thank Emma Pink for her invaluable help as a research assistant. My initial interest in Romantic-era circus grew out of a conversation about the 1797 Montreal circus that I had with Tony Montague, reporter for the *Georgia Straight*.

² Astley presented his entertainments at a number of different venues over the course of many decades under several different names; Astley's Royal Amphitheatre was the name used in 1797.

Astley's Amphitheatre featured a dizzying array of acts designed to amuse and amaze.

LAST TWO NIGHTS OF THE FOLLOWING
AMUSEMENTS.
NEW, GRAND, SERIOUS, and COMIC PANTOMIME,
now performing at Paris, with universal applause, called
CUPID and PSYCHE; the Scenery, Machinery, Dresses,
and Music are entirely new.
AMPHITHEATRE OF ARTS, (ASTLEY'S) WESTMIN-
STER-BRIDGE.
By their Royal Highnesses the Prince of Wales and Duke of
York's Servants,
THIS PRESENT FRIDAY, the 29th, and
To-morrow, Saturday, the 30th, (as performing at
Paris) a Grand, Serious, and Comic Pantomime Spectacle,
in Four Parts, called
CUPID AND PSYCHE.
Interpersed with a most splendid Variety of Scenery, Ma-
chinery, Transformations, &c. &c. with new Dresses,
Decorations, &c.
As it is not possible to insert the numerous Characters,
nor to give a true description of this grand, beautiful, and
interesting Spectacle, within the small compass of a hand-
bill, the Public are respectfully informed, that Pamphlets,
containing the whole of the Particulars, will be distribut-
ed GRATIS at the doors of the Box, Pit, and Gallery,
during the Nights of its Representation, viz. Friday the
29th, and Saturday the 30th of September.
A Musical Entertainment, called
THE WIDOW AND NO WIDOW.
In the course of the Stage Performances will be presented
the EXERCISES of the MONKIES.
The Grand Troops of Tumblers and Equestrians will ex-
hibit various Feats on Foot and Horseback; and the
Learned Horse will go through his numerous and pleasing
Performances.
In the course of the Evening, several new Comic Songs,
particularly
TIPPY JACK'S DESCRIPTION of DRIVING a GIG;
Or, Young GILPIN'S Journey to Hyde Park Corner,
in Dress and Character of the present Fashion,
By Mr. JOHANNOT.
The whole to conclude (being most assuredly the last week
of its being performed this Season) with the new much-
admired Grand Serio and Comic Pantomime, called
THE EGYPTIAN ORACLE;
Or, HARLEQUIN CRIMINAL.
Interpersed with a most splendid variety of Scenery, Ma-
chinery, Mechanical Changes, Scenic Transformations,
Metamorphoses, &c. suited to the Customs and Manners
of the Egyptians, contrasted with the Europeans of the
present day.
The Music, Songs, Duets, Chorusses, Dances, Dresses, &c.
entirely new, and analogous to the Piece.
Doors to be opened at Half past Five, and to begin at
Half past Six o'clock.
Box 4s. Second Price 2s.—Pit 2s. Second Price 1s.—
Gallery 1s. Second Price 6d.—Second Price to commence at
Half past Eight o'clock precisely.
Places to be taken of Mrs. Connell, at the Theatre,
Westminster-Bridge.

[Fig. 1].

With doors opening at half past five, audiences would be treated to a “NEW, GRAND, SERIOUS, and COMIC PANTOMIME” entitled “CUPID AND PSYCHE,” followed by a “Musical Entertainment” called “THE WIDOW AND NO WIDOW.” Next up would be Senior Leonardi’s trained “MONKIES” performing their “EXERCISES,” the “Grand Troops of Tumblers,” the “Learned Horse” with his “numerous and pleasing

Performances,” and “Equestrian” entertainments. The evening was to conclude with another novelty, the “much-admired Grand Serio and Comic Pantomime” called “THE EGYPTIAN ORACLE; Or, HARLEQUIN CRIMINAL,” featuring “a most splendid variety of Scenery, Machinery, Mechanical Changes, Scenic Transformations, Metamorphoses, &c. suited to the Customs and Manners of the Egyptians, contrasted with the Europeans of the present day.” In other words, it was to be another typical night at Astley’s.

Sandwiched between these descriptions of military horses, death-defying feats of tumbling and spectacular machinery is information about the performance of a “comic song”: “TIPPY JACK’S DESCRIPTION of DRIVING A GIG; or Young GILPIN’S Journey to Hyde Park Corner” to be sung by “Mr. JOHANNOT.” The bold face typography used to advertise this song suggests that this vocal act was considered equally as compelling to contemporary audiences as any of the more exotic spectacles. To a twenty-first century observer, this seems puzzling. Why should a song attract the same attention as the antics of a troupe of trained monkeys or the acrobatics of a group of trick riders? How could the sound of one man singing possibly compete with the other visually stunning and action-packed spectacles featured that night? In the essay that follows, I consider further the example of that song and others like it that were performed night after night onstage of Astley’s.³ As a form of entertainment grouping together

³ For informative works on circus, see Paul Bouissac, *Circus and Culture: A Semiotic Approach* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976); Katie Lavers and Petra Tait, *The Routledge Circus Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 2016); George Speaight, *A*

miscellaneous activities such as horseback riding and other animal acts, acrobatics, fireworks and, eventually, musical theatre, early circus has suffered from scholarly neglect as it has fallen between disciplines and even between subfields within disciplines.⁴ If circus in general has been overlooked by researchers of numerous

History of the Circus (London: Tantivy, 1980); and Helen Stoddart, *Rings of Desire: Circus History and Representation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000). There is also now a UK and Ireland Circus Research Network and Global Institute for Circus Studies.

⁴ Within the discipline of literary studies, early circus has been pushed to the margins as a subfield of theatre studies. For important works of literary scholarship that consider circus venues along with other illegitimate theatrical venues. the discipline of literary studies, see: Jane Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre in London, 1770-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), Daniel O'Quinn, *Staging Governance: Theatrical Imperialism in London, 1770-1800* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), Gillian Russell, *The Theatres of War: Performance, Politics, and Society, 1793-1815* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), David Worrall, *Theatric Revolution: Drama, Censorship, and Romantic Period Subcultures 1773-1832* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), *The Politics of Romantic Theatricality, 1787-1832* (Houndmills: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007) and *Harlequin Empire: Race, Ethnicity and the Drama of the Popular Enlightenment* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2007).

disciplines, the study of song within circus has been doubly marginalized.⁵ In focusing here on circus songs, I seek not only to put one of the most popular Romantic-era sites of entertainment in London back on the map but also, in a complementary approach to that of soundscape studies, to restore a sense of the importance of sound to the sights audiences would have enjoyed there.⁶

As I will suggest, circus songs like “TIPPY JACK’S DESCRIPTION of DRIVING A GIG” give us an opportunity to rethink our understanding of song in the Romantic era. Like other objects at the time that existed at the interstices of the ephemeral and the material, circus songs challenge the boundaries between performance and print. In *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, Diana Taylor suggests that “taking performance seriously” as “a system of learning, storing, and transmitting knowledge . . . allows us to expand what we understand by “knowledge.”⁷ As Taylor observes:

⁵ Kim Baston is one of the few scholars to foreground music in her research on circus and popular culture. See “Circus Music: The Eye of the Ear,” *Popular Entertainment Studies* 1, no. 2 (2010): 6-25 and “Harlequin Highlander: Spectacular geographies at the Edinburgh Equestrian Circus, 1790–1800,” *Early Popular Visual Culture* 12, no. 3 (2014): 283-303.

⁶ For an overview, see Jonathan Sterne, *The Sound Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 2012)..

⁷ *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 16.

By shifting the focus from written to embodied culture, from the discursive to the performatic, we need to shift our methodologies. Instead of focusing on patterns of cultural expression in terms of texts and narratives, we might think about them as scenarios that do not reduce gestures and embodied practices to narrative description. (16)

In their performatic mode, circus songs, too, need to be taken seriously as markers of “expressive, embodied culture.” I want to suggest, however, that the appeal of circus songs as they were advertised and presented night after night at Astley’s – and at other circus venues -- was a function not just of their performance by singing bodies. Rather, their attraction derived from their intermedial status as they circulated between stage and page, between gestures and texts. Circus songs were sometimes based on earlier performed or printed works; they gained further currency from being associated with particular singers in the context of the variety of shows at the circus venues; and, in their material forms as engraved music, as items in song collections and as slip songs, they facilitated new kinds of private, semi-private and public performances that were not necessarily connected to the memory or anticipation of their performance onstage. Because of their connection with the circus, a constantly evolving form of illegitimate entertainment consisting of “an indiscriminate blend of lyrical genres, cheerfully disrespectful of cultural hierarchies,”⁸ circus songs, at least in their early manifestations in the late eighteenth century, were unique, possessing different associations from, for

⁸ Marius Kwent, "The Legitimization of the Circus in Late Georgian England," *Past & Present* 174, no. 1 (2002): 80.

example, songs featured at the legitimate theatres or pleasure gardens. As multi-modal vectors of entertainment, however, circus songs can be considered as items in a core sample, as it were, drawn from the extensive layers that made up the complex landscape of song culture in the Romantic era.⁹

I want to trace the growing role of circus songs in the developing song culture of the Romantic era by focusing on the increasing attention paid to songs in newspaper advertisements in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century for one specific circus venue, the aforementioned Astley's, and on the expanding number of and varieties of publications in which songs from that circus appeared. As data for this study, I draw on a little-known archive now housed at the British Library, "Astley's Cuttings from Newspapers," which I used in the creation of a digital humanities project entitled "Reconstructing Early Circus: A Database of Entertainments at Astley's Amphitheatre, 1768-1833."¹⁰ The archive includes advertisements for Astley's performances that

⁹ See Chapter One of Oskar Cox Jensen's *Napoleon and British Song, 1797-1822* (Houndmills: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2015) for an excellent overview of popular song during the Romantic era.

¹⁰ "Reconstructing Early Circus: A Database of Entertainments at Astley's Amphitheatre, 1768-1833" <https://dhil.lib.sfu.ca/circus/>. Unless otherwise noted, subsequent references to advertisements from Astley's are from the database and indicated by the handwritten date of publication. I am grateful to Rebecca Dowson and Michael Joyce of SFU's DHIL who helped me create the website and also to the four undergraduate RAs who

appeared in newspapers between 1768 and 1833. Organized chronologically into three volumes and punctuated with printed reviews, occasional hand-written copies of advertisements, and other materials (including a lock of Astley's daughter-in-law's hair), the cuttings were collected around 1817 by the actor, theatre manager, and author of *The Theatric Tourist* (1805), James Winston (1779-1843), who had planned to use the materials in compiling a comprehensive history of the theatre (never completed). The "Reconstructing Early Circus" database includes transcriptions of the materials from "Astley's Cuttings from Newspapers" in a searchable form which allows us to trace the development particular features of the entertainments over time as well as Astley's strategies for marketing them. While it is important to bear in mind that the advertisements do not necessarily reflect the actual performances that occurred at Astley's (there were no frequent changes to the program as it was advertised), they do give us a sense of what was considered appealing to audiences at the time. An examination of the materials from the archive and database in conjunction with consideration of a variety of printed materials which included the songs allows us to see how Astley's functioned as a unique node in a complex and expanding network of song culture in the nation's capital during the Romantic era.

The origins of the form of entertainment that we now refer to as circus can be traced back to the equestrian performances of Phillip Astley and his wife, Patty, in the

worked on it: Grace Chen, Courtenay Connor, Gurleen Grewal and particularly Alyssa Bridgman for all the hours she put in.

late 1760's.¹¹ Brought up in Newcastle-Under-Lyme, Phillip Astley had enlisted and served in the 15th Light Dragoons under General William Elliott in the Seven Years War.¹² After the end of the war, he returned to England and opened a riding school in an area named Halfpenny Hatch in Lambeth, supplementing his income as an instructor to the gentry by performing trick riding. The first advertisement for Astley's "ACTIVITY on HO[R]SEBACK," published in the *Gazetteer and Public Advertiser* for 4 April, 1768, promises that "Near twenty different attitudes will be performed on one, two and three horses every evening during the summer season excepting Sundays."¹³ Astley was certainly not the first person to perform popular equestrian entertainments for money, but he is acknowledged to have been the first person to have had the idea of using an enclosed space where he could present his equestrian shows to a paying audience.

The early entertainments at Astley's consisted largely of feats of horsemanship by men, women and by children -- but they also soon incorporated other novel acts such as acrobatics, automaton, bees swarming around their "trainer" in the shape of a wig, and tricks performed by the "Little Learned MILITARY HORSE." Astley was particularly assiduous to assure the comfort of the nobility at his venue. A 1772 playbill indicates that "Mr. ASTLEY has been at a very great Expence [sic] in making Preparations for the

¹¹ One of the notable characteristics of early circus was that it featured female as well as male entertainers, including trick horseback riders and acrobats.

¹² Elliott rewarded him after the war for his services with the gift of a charger named Billy.

¹³ 4 April, 1768 *Gazetteer and Public Advertiser*

General Nights, in Order to accommodate the Nobility in an elegant manner, therefore flatters himself, the Variety and Drollness of the several Exhibitions cannot fail of giving the greatest Satisfaction to every Beholder, as there never was a Performance of its Kind at One Place in Europe.”¹⁴ In addition, he “humbly” requests that “the Nobility will be in good Time, in order to see the whole general Display” and suggests that he himself will greet the servants who arrive at four o’clock and will help them secure “such Places as they shall request.” The appearance of gentry at the circus performances also gave Astley as opportunity to advertise his riding lessons, as notices in the newspapers frequently indicate that “Ladies and Gentlemen are carefully instructed in all the rudiments of riding on horseback, six lessons one guinea, taken when convenient.”¹⁵ But, although Astley was anxious to “accommodate the Nobility,” his amphitheatre was also designed for a much wider audience, virtually anyone who could afford the price of entry. As a 1779 advertisement noted, “The many pleasing new entertainments which are now exhibiting at Astley’s Amphitheatre Riding-House, Westminster-bridge . . . have given universal applause to all ranks of spectators.”¹⁶ Astley’s was a site of sociability for all classes in Romantic-era London, albeit one that confirmed social hierarchy by providing special

¹⁴ Victoria and Albert Museum THM/LON/ASTL/1772

<https://www.vam.ac.uk/archives/unit/ARC18271>

¹⁵ “Reconstructing Early Circus,” 19 July, 1780.

¹⁶ “Reconstructing Early Circus,” no date; item 143.

seats for the higher classes. Admittance at Astley's was organized according to the following fees: "Box 2s. 6d. Upper Box 1s. 6d. Pit 1s. Gall[ery]. 6d."¹⁷

The growth of Astley's entertainments correlates with what Richard Altick identifies as "an insatiable appetite for novelty" in the late eighteenth century that was "stimulated in part by the first stirrings of the mass communication industry" and that depended upon managers anticipating "what the public wanted at a given moment."¹⁸ Astley was an astute businessman. With the profits from his popular shows, he was able to expand his enterprise over the next few years. He and his troupe performed in Dublin in 1773 and Paris in 1774, and they also played in the provincial areas of England.¹⁹ In 1779, Astley's moved to a better site on Westminster Bridge Road and added a roof and a stage to his amphitheatre. In 1786, he also established a permanent location in Paris at the Cirque du Palais Royal. Astley was constantly changing the acts performed at his circus, drawing attention to "what the public wanted at a given moment" through his creative use of typography on his handbills and writing enticing copy for his advertisements. The

¹⁷ "Reconstructing Early Circus," 24 December, 1781

¹⁸ Richard Altick, *The Shows of London* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 3.

¹⁹ See Kwint, "Astley's" 27; Helen Burke, "Jacobin Revolutionary Theatre and the Early Circus: Astley's Dublin Amphitheatre," *Theatre Research International* 31, no. 1 (2006): 1-16. In *Manchester in Holiday Dress* (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1866), Richard Wright Procter notes that Astley visited Manchester during the Easter fair in 1773, "when he and his pupils exhibited their feats of horsemanship in Camp Field, during a stay of ten days" (43).

advertisement for the 7 September 1807 performance is typical in claiming that it offered a “Total Change of Entertainment.”²⁰ In fact, the words “new” “first” appear 1709 times and 680 times respectively in the advertisements in the advertisements transcribed for the “Reconstructing Early Circus” database. Astley’s success also encouraged other entertainment entrepreneurs to try their hand at the circus business. Sites similar to Astley’s sprang up within London and other locations in the British archipelago as well as in Europe and North America, including Jones’s Equestrian Amphitheatre in Whitechapel (1786), Swan’s Amphitheatre in Birmingham (1787), the Edinburgh Equestrian Circus (1790), Ricketts’s Equestrian Pantheon in Boston (1794) and Montreal (1797), and the Royal Circus, Equestrian and Philharmonic Academy in London (1782).²¹ Circus was becoming established not just as a location of entertainment in the metropolis, but also as a national and transnational phenomenon.

Because they threatened the profits of the patent theatre owners and managers, entrepreneurs of early circus found themselves subjected to constant threats of

²⁰ “Reconstructing Early Circus,” 7 September 1807.

²¹ See Baston, “Harlequin Highlander”; James Dibdin, *The Annals of the Edinburgh Stage with an Account of the Rise and Progress of Dramatic Writing in Scotland* (Edinburgh: R. Cameron, 1888); and James S. Moy, “Entertainments at John B. Ricketts’s Circus, 1793-1800,” *Educational Theatre Journal* 30 no. 2 (1978): 187-202; and James Moy, “The First Circus in Eastern Canada,” *Theatre Research in Canada / Recherches théâtrales au Canada* (January, 1980)

<<https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/TRIC/article/view/7538/8597>>.

prosecution. As Marius Kwint notes, “rival theatre managers . . . encouraged local magistrates to prosecute the early [circus] companies for various infringements of the licensing regulations and offences against public order.”²² But this was a small deterrent, considering the profits that were to be made. Circus continued to expand, and, because circus managers needed to ensure repeat visits by audiences, they were constantly on the lookout for new material. The circus became an embodiment of modernity, delivering to consumers an experience of the present that was constantly drawing attention to its own fleeting nature as well as promising further fleeting experiences to come. A 22 August, 1798 advertisement, for example, announces the “Last Week of the present Amusements” at the same time drawing attention to “more Novelties being in Rehearsal, agreeable to the Plan of perpetual Change, solely confined to, and so generally approved by the numerous visitors of this Theatre.”²³

In attempting to attract audiences with the latest novelties, the early advertisements for Astley’s rarely make reference to music and song. There are, nevertheless, a few clues that help us reconstruct a sense of the musical soundscape of the entertainments. A retrospective account of “Astley and His Musicians” from 1878 also discusses the soundscapes at Astley’s, noting that when Astley began his equestrian

²² See Kwint, “The Legitimization of the Circus,” 74. As Kwint points out, as a “hybrid” genre, “neither fully dramatic not entirely the stuff of the fairground,” circus actually helped “free the entire theatrical hierarchy from a long history of repression and censorship” (74).

²³ “Reconstructing Early Circus,” 22 August, 1798.

demonstrations, he had “no other music than a common drum, which was beaten by his wife.”²⁴ According to this article, Astley subsequently added “a fife” to the drumbeat, with “the players standing on a kind of small platform, placed in the centre of the ring.” The writer sums up Astley’s perspective on music: “. . . as an accompaniment to equestrian exercises, Astley always considered that loudness was the most desirable quality in music.” Whether or not this accurately reflects Astley’s musical sensibilities, it is clear that the first music at the Riding School and Amphitheatre was designed to encourage the military associations of his past career on which Astley was trying to capitalize. Moreover, in the midst of what was no doubt a noisy cacophony of audience members talking and yelling, the drum, either alone or accompanied by the fife or trumpet, focused attention on the spectacle and united the spectators in a common somatic experience of rhythm.

The first act to be singled out in the newspaper advertisements for its musical associations was staged in July, 1772 and was performed not by humans but by a “Piece of Machinery” called a “Chronoscope.” The “Chronoscope” offered a “Display of Eastern Manners,” depicting a “Nabob” figure, a moving “Elephant” complete with its “Conductors,” and representations of “the Sun, Tulip and Passion Flowers.”²⁵ In addition to being “elegantly finished in a capital Manner,” the instrument was capable of performing “various Pieces of Music, so that the Eye and Ear are delighted at the same

²⁴ Edward Walford, “Old and New London,” *British History Online* 6 (1878), <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/old-new-london/vol6>.

²⁵ *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (18 August, 1772)

time.” Similarly, the Easter 1777 season also featured automatons playing “on various musical instruments,” including the German flute.²⁶ Other musical acts that were noted in early advertisements were connected with Astley’s son, John, who, as child and youth, captivated audiences with his feats of agility. The performance of November 24, 1780, for example, featured “Master ASTLEY, who, in a most amazing equilibrium, whilst the horse is on a gallop, dances and vaults, etc.; also plays an air on the violin.”²⁷ In these cases, what is important is the fact that the music is defamiliarized, detached from the method in which it is conventionally represented. In this context, the sound is important not for its own sake, but as a component in helping to create an impression of wonder and curiosity for the audience.

The first reference to specific songs in the advertisements concerning Astley’s appeared in 1780 in the context of the “THE LILIPUTIAN WORLD: Or CHINESE SHADOWS” acts. Adapted from the “Ombres Chinoises” popularized by François Dominique Séraphin at Versailles in 1772, “Chinese Shadows” had quickly become a regular feature in the early years of Astley’s.²⁸ A July 19, 1780 advertisement suggests that at least certain of the shadow scenes had songs connected with them:

²⁶ “Reconstructing Early Circus,” 29 March, 1777.

²⁷ “Reconstructing Early Circus,” 24 November, 1780.

²⁸ *A History of Pre-cinema, Volume 3*, ed. Stephen Herbert (London and New York: Routledge, 2000).

Scene I. the Merry Cobbler, [sic] a new scene, with songs. Scene II. the curious Hornpipe Dancer. Scene III. the Militia Man; or, the Hen Peck'd Weaver, with songs, and a striking view of the camp. Scene VI. the Lion Catchers. Scene V. the Broken Bridge. Scene VI. the Grinder, a new scene. Scene VII. the Storm, &c. Lyrics from a patriotic song associated with a different scene in the "Chinese Shadows" were subsequently published in a newspaper on 23 May, 1782 with the indication that it was "*Introduced last night at Mr. ASTLEY'S Riding School*":

Come my lads with souls befitting,
Let us never be dismay'd,
But avenge the wrongs of Britain,
And support her injur'd trade.

Five French ships with all their treasure,
Now my boys submit to fate;
Rodney's conduct gives us pleasure,
And the victory proves him great!

On the gallant *Howe* depending,
We, the crafty Dutch will tame;
And affronted vengeance sending,
Shew the world old England's fame.

With loud peals of British thunder,
Rattling on each hostile shore,
Britain's foes shall still knock under,
Nor shall dare insult us more!²⁹

In fact, the same song had been printed two years earlier in a collection called *The Roundelay; Or, the New Syren; a Collection of Choice Songs* which was designed to include both “such of the old songs” as have “stood the test of approbation” and “the *new* that are now sung at the *theatres* and *public gardens*.”³⁰ Here, too, it was accompanied by a note indicating that it was “Sung at Astley’s Riding School.” The appearance of the song in the songster then in the newspaper suggests the way that songs from Astley’s were beginning to circulate in multi-media environments, existing in both performatic and textual forms. It also suggests a shift away from music just serving as a background soundscape designed to elevate the impact of the spectacles. Song was becoming a spectacle in its own right.

Astley himself capitalized on and encouraged the association of his venue with music and song in both performatic and textual forms by publishing *The favourite Aires set for the Violin, German Flute, Harp or Harpsichord, with a Bass, together with the*

²⁹ “Reconstructing Early Circus,” 1 April, 1785.

³⁰ “Preface,” in *The Roundelay; Or, the New Syren; a Collection of Choice Songs* (London: W. Lane, 1780).

Scene of the Broken Bridge, in the Ombres Chinoises in 1780.³¹ He already had experience with what would be called today “merchandising tie-ins,” printing *The Modern Riding Master: or, a Key to the Knowledge of the Horse and Horsemanship* under his own name in 1775 in order to promote his equestrian skills,³² and, later, in 1785, also printing *Natural Magic: or, Physical Amusements Revealed By Phillip Astley, Riding Master*, which included a subtitle noting that those amusements discussed “are intended to be added to the several Entertainments” at Astley’s.³³ *The favourite Airs set for the Violin, German Flute, Harp or Harpsichord*, printed by Henry Pace of Bermondsey Street, was also designed to promote the live entertainments at Astley’s. The subtitle of the publication, “*As Exhibited every Evening at the Amphitheatre Riding-House, Westminster-Bridge*,” makes a direct connection between the printed version of *The favourite Airs* and the scene of performance. Moreover, the work was only available for sale “at the Place of Exhibition,” suggesting that it would have been purchased solely by consumers who had already seen or were intending to see the performance. In this case, the performatic and printed forms were directly connected.

³¹ *The favourite Airs set for the Violin, German Flute, Harp or Harpsichord, with a Bass, together with the Scene of the Broken Bridge, as performed in the pleasing Exhibition of the Ombres Chinoises, or Chinese Shadows* (London: Printed by H. Pace, Bermondsey-Street, Southwark, 1780).

³² *The Modern Riding Master: or, a Key to the Knowledge of the Horse and Horsemanship* (London: n.p., 1775).

³³ *Natural Magic: or, Physical Amusement Revealed* (London: n.p., 1785).

In addition to the music for “Rope-Dancer,” “Dock-Yard, [sic] Air,” “Woman’s Dance,” “Air in the Fire-Works,” and “March in the Pyramids,” the text also features the complete dialogue, music and song from “*the Scene of the Broken Bridge*.” “The Broken Bridge” vignette was a standard scene from Séraphin’s “Ombres Chinoises” repertoire, which, as the title page to *The Favourite Airs* notes, was “translated from the French by PHILIP ASTLEY, RIDING-MASTER” for its performance at the London venue. Astley’s version, like Séraphin’s, focuses on the class dynamic between a gentleman traveler who wishes to cross to the other side of a river and the carpenter who is attempting to fix the broken bridge that spans the river. The gentleman asks for information to help him make his way to town, while the carpenter offers responses which are so unhelpful that they indicate the responder is either “a Fool,” as the gentlemen first suspects, or, as turns out to be the case, deliberately insolent. The traveler gets his revenge at the end of the scene, however, crossing over the river by boat and beating the carpenter so that he falls into the water. In response to the carpenter’s cries for help, the gentleman directs him to “Drown for your Impertinence” (8). Significantly, the carpenter’s impertinent answers are all delivered in song, with a repeating nonsense chorus, “Tol lol de day oh,” which emphasizes his lack of respect for his social superior. Indeed, the traveller’s *sotto voce* comment before he beats the carpenter, “I’ll give you the Tol-lol, by and by, my Friend” (8), suggests his recognition of the way that song was being used to amplify the carpenter’s insolence.

In *Illegitimate Theatre in London, 1770-1840*, Jane Moody suggests that the law preventing the minor theatres from presenting spoken drama “encouraged the evolution

of a dramaturgy which foregrounded visible and musical signs.”³⁴ According to Moody, the “blending of language and musical sound required performers to adopt a heightened emotional pitch and register, and imbued the dramatization of extreme psychological states with a peculiar power and quasi-supernatural intensity” (87). Moody argues that although these musical performances did not necessarily constitute political dissent, they did offer “a certain, limited political freedom” as they “transformed how the contemporary world could be imagined on stage” (117). The performed version of “The Broken Bridge” vignette allowed for similar political re-imaginings. In the context of its performance, for example, the song could have had the effect of creating an unintended somatic sympathy for the carpenter. His was, after all, the only singing human voice in the show. Moreover, while the beating of the carpenter would have been recognized as a narrative of appropriate punishment for an inferior’s lack of respect for his social superior, the chaotic noise accompanying beating would have interrupted the sympathetic singing voice with a series of violent blows, an action that again could have inadvertently produced a negative affect. The performed version of the Broken Bridge created what can be seen as an ambiguous experience of the class conflict. This ambiguity would only have been amplified by the scene’s performance at the amphitheatre, with an audience consisting of members of many classes; those representing the traveler’s class were indeed in the minority.

Moody focuses on the politics of the performing bodies on the stage, noting, for example, that “the performer’s body had become a complex gestural script to be

³⁴ Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre in London, 1770-1840*, 83.

interpreted through the language of music” (87). But “The Broken Bridge” vignette was not just performed at Astley’s. By providing audiences with an opportunity to purchase the music and the scene from his performance, Astley not only promoted his entertainments beyond the limited number of nights of performance, he also facilitated new performances that would take place in multiple locations by audience members who purchased a copy of his book. The rendering of the songs into consumable printed works that could be re-performed in a variety of private or semi-private contexts complicates the political agency that Moody associates with the performance of illegitimate theatrical productions, allowing for multiple reinterpretations. Not only could audiences “transform[] . . . the contemporary world” presented on stage in their imaginations; they could also transform the stage transformations. The carpenter would always sing his song, and always be beaten for his insolence, but the affect of both the singing and the beating could be adjusted in off-stage performances to suit the amateur performers’ tastes.

The opportunities for consumers to transform performances at Astley’s expanded exponentially after this point as the role of song within Astley’s underwent its most dramatic change in the mid-1780’s in response to innovations introduced by Astley’s most formidable rival, The Royal Circus. The Royal Circus, Equestrian and Philharmonic Academy, to give it its full title, a joint venture between Charles Hughes, a former performer at Astley’s, and Charles Dibdin, opened its doors in 1782 less than half a mile

away from Astley's.³⁵ With a proscenium stage as well as a riding amphitheatre, the Royal Circus offered musical theatre along with the more spectacular acts. Hughes' and Dibdin primarily represented musical dramas in order to avoid the eye of the magistrates and the ire of the managers of the legitimate theatres which had a monopoly on spoken drama. As David Worrall succinctly suggests, during this time, "musicality was the key element defining legality."³⁶ But, in the highly competitive world of circus venues, the introduction of a novelty in one establishment created a domino effect, convincing Astley, too, to try his hand at incorporating burlettas and pantomimes into his entertainments. Accordingly, on Easter Monday, 1784, Astley's opened under the altered name The Royal Grove with two new acts: a "comic ballet" entitled "The Peasants of the Alps" (which was advertised as coming from the "Theatres in Paris") and a concluding pantomime, "Jupiter in Disguise; Or, the Rape of Europa."

The shift to musical drama had implications for performances at Astley's, including greater attention paid to specific singers. Astley started contracting with a regular orchestra and employed an expanding number of singers. The singer Jacob DeCastro notes in his memoir that he joined the company after being told that "Mr. Astley, senior, would give any salary to performers who were burletta singers, in order to

³⁵ See Michael Burden, "Dibdin at the Royal Circus," in *Charles Dibdin and Late Georgian Culture*, ed. Oskar Cox Jensen, David Kennerley, and Ian Newman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

³⁶ Worrall, *Harlequin Empire*, 9.

oppose the success of the rival house.”³⁷ The Royal Circus singer, Richard Johannot, followed suit as did “Mrs. Asker and several other performers in the burletta line.”³⁸ Accompanying the shift to include musical theatre pieces there was a notable increase in the mention of stand-alone songs in the advertisements for Astley’s. By 1790, songs were regularly being advertised at Astley’s as part of the musical shows and pantomimes, and they were also being featured, as the above advertisement for “Tippy Jack’s” song suggests, as entertainments in their own right. On occasion, the songs actually became the feature presentations. The advertisement for the 6 October, 1800 performance, for example, suggests the songs outweigh the other acts, as the night’s bill of fare features:

EQUESTRIAN EXERCISES; Serious and Comic Dancing; with the Grand Pantomimical Ballet of THE DESERTER.—Several Comic Songs, to be sung by Mr. JOHANNOT; particularly an entire new one, (written by Mr. Upton) called Mrs. Betty and Humphry Jenkins, to the celebrated old Irish Air of High Randy Dandy O. Also the celebrated Irish Song, sung by Mr. Johannot with such unbounded applause at Sadler’s Wells, on Monday the 22d of September, (written by C. Dibdin, jun. and composed by Sanderson) called Dermot O’Dogherty’s Description of a Storm, Paddy M’Gree’s Definition of English Bulls, and their joint Ideas of Matrimony. And an entire new Song, (written by C. Dibdin, jun. and composed by Broad) called The Match-Boy . . . A favourite Song, (composed

³⁷ Jacob DeCastro, *The Memoirs of J. De Castro, Comedian* (London: Sherwood, Jones & Company, 1824), 26.

³⁸ DeCastro, *Memoirs*, 37.

by Shields) by Miss Gray.—The whole to conclude with the Serio-Comic Pantomime of QUIXOTE and SANCHO.³⁹

As songs became the common fare, they developed in dynamic relationship with the singers so that the celebrity of the singers reinforced the popularity of the songs, while, conversely, the popularity of the songs added to the celebrity of the singer.

The inclusion of musical drama and the performance of individual songs by celebrity singers not only profoundly changed the nature of the circus in performance; ironically, it also facilitated a disconnection between the songs and the somatic experience of viewing the performance at Astley's. As the above example of "the celebrated Irish Song" that was "sung by Mr. Johannot with such unbounded applause at Sadler's Wells" makes clear, songs and singers circulated between Astley's and other venues of entertainment. Moreover, the expansion of the role of song within the circus also coincided with and contributed to the growing market for songs in the print marketplace.⁴⁰ As Gillen D'Arcy Wood comments, "the music business was coming increasingly to resemble literary culture in its middle-class, commercial character, with

³⁹ "Reconstructing Early Circus," 6 October, 1800.

⁴⁰ DeCastro's *Memoirs* also illustrates this aspect as he notes that the "proprietors" of the Royal Circus "generously" had the burletta called "Old Robin Gray" by Frederic Pilon printed, then "presented the copies of it to Mr. Pilon, which were then sold in the theatre, as well as in the shops of the Metropolis" (18).

an explosion in publishing and a network of distribution modeled on the book trade.”⁴¹

Unlike the productions of literary culture, however, musical publications were designed not just as items of consumption but also as mediations designed to facilitate further performance, as they turned consumers of the music into performers themselves. Songs from Astley’s were marketed in different forms to different kinds of consumers as the songs associated with the circus were printed and circulated in a variety of texts. While the songs from Astley’s printed in various material forms still bore the textual traces of their performative life in their subtitles --indeed, this connection served to increase their popularity – consumers need not necessarily have seen the songs performed on stage at Astley’s in order to perform them in new contexts.

A number of the songs that were performed on stage at Astley’s were printed as engraved sheet music for piano, voice and other instruments, bringing amateur singers and players together in controlled semi-public situations as opposed to the original public performance at Astley’s.⁴² “The Huntsman’s Delight, A FAVOURITE HUNTING SONG,” printed and sold by W[illiam] Campbell, No. 11 New Street, Covent Garden,” offers an example of a song from Astley’s which circulated in the genteel drawing rooms of London. Again, the printed version of the song incorporates details about its performance into its title, noting that it was “Sung by Mr. Connell at Astley’s

⁴¹ D’Arcy Wood, *Romanticism and Music Culture in Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 5.

⁴² See also Derek B. Scott, *The Singing Bourgeois: Songs of the Victorian Drawing Room and Parlour* (London: Routledge, 2017).

Amphitheatre In the interlude of the Taylor's Fox Hunt." Composed by William Reeve (1757-1815), an organist and composer who started working at Astley's in 1783,⁴³ the song presents a pastoral perspective on hunting, merging the visual splendours of nature with the sounds of hunting: "The Sun it now cheers the gay fields with its Beams/each meadow around how delightful it seems/while sweetly each neighbouring hill it resounds/Again with the echoing cry of the Hounds."⁴⁴ The song itself resonated with and drew from the genre of "sportsman's" songs that were sung in the pleasure gardens as well as published in works like *The Huntsman's Delight: a choice collection of new Songs*.⁴⁵

The entertainment from which the song was drawn, the "Taylors [sic] Fox Hunt," advertised at Astley's during the 1785 and 1786 seasons, however, was a comic equestrian act, a "burlesque" which had the effect of "threw[ing] the whole house into a

⁴³ Slonimsky, Nicolas, et al. "Reeve, William." *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians* 5 (New York: Schirmer, 2001), 2947. Gale Virtual Reference Library, http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/CX3491810640/GVRL?u=sfu_z39&sid=GVRL&xid=cad3ad1f.

⁴⁴ G 296.bb (2.) *The Huntsmans Delight, a favorite hunting song, sung by Mr. Connell, at Astleys Amphitheatre, in the interlude of the Taylors [sic] Fox Hunt* (London: William Campbell, c. 1785).

⁴⁵ *The Huntsman's Delight: a choice collection of new Songs* (Tewkesbury, n.p., 1773, 1790?).

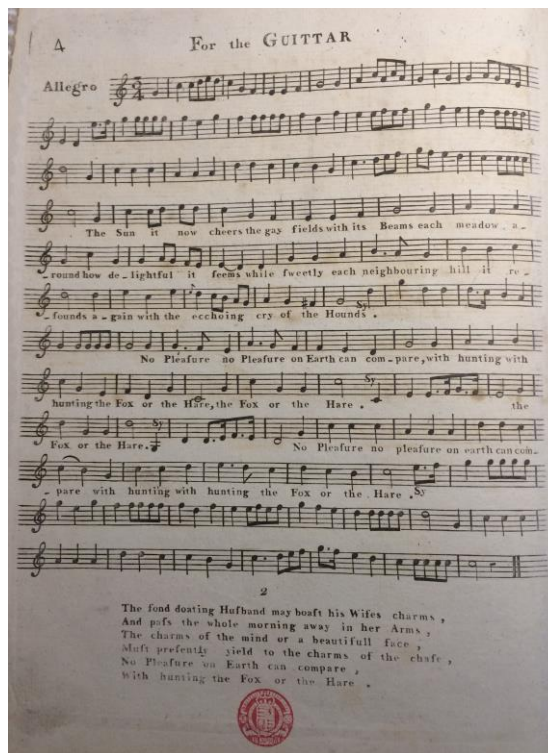
paroxysm of laughter and applause.”⁴⁶ It expanded on the popularity of one of Astley’s earliest and most notable pieces, “the Taylor riding to Brentford,” in which Astley acted the part of a tailor who was unable to properly manage his horse. David Worrall suggests that the original performance of the “Tailor’s Ride to Brentford” was “based on the tale of a tailor galloping to Brentford in order to be on time to vote for the radical Whig leader John Wilkes, in the controversial 1768 Middlesex election.”⁴⁷ It was one of the most consistent acts at Astley’s, appearing 168 times in the advertisements in the “Reconstructing Early Circus” database. Instead of presenting the antics of just one tailor, the 1785 expanded version of the spectacle included a troupe of equestrian performers acting as tailors who were unskilled at horsemanship. A newspaper review commented on the expanded act, suggesting that “Although the Taylor riding to Brentford was an exhibition which afforded the greatest entertainment from its satire, grotesque appearance and performance, and the admirable training of the horse, yet we are much more entertained by this groupe of Taylors riding in pursuit of the fox.”⁴⁸ In its new form, the act also featured a number of obstacles around which the riders attempted (and failed) to navigate. As the writer of the review continues, “The reality of the fox and hounds divests us of every idea of its being a fiction, and therefore we receive the same entertainment as we should receive were we to be spectators of a parcel of taylors in an actual fox-chace [sic], and being exposed, as bad horsemen, to the danger of leaping over

⁴⁶ “Reconstructing Early Circus,” 5 May, 1785.

⁴⁷ Worrall, *Theatric Revolution*, 100.

⁴⁸ “Reconstructing Early Circus,” March, 1785.

stiles, hedges, ditches, and five-barr'd gates." "The "Taylors [sic] Fox Hunt" repeats the political slant of "the Taylor riding to Brentford," but the emphasis is less on the radical politics of the tailor than on satirizing individuals of the middling sort attempting to transcend their class by aping activities traditionally associated with gentlemen. In its performative context at the circus, then, "The Huntsman's Delight" served as a change of pace between the comic acts of the tailors, its genteel lyrics contrasting with the physical humour and providing a further satirical element. In the published version, however, the song acquires different overtones, as Campbell's version offers music for voice and piano, and also, on a separate page, the lyrics and the music in simple melody form "For



the Guitarr" [Fig. 3].

Ironically, in its engraved published form, the song became a consumer item designed to satisfy the musical aspirations of a middling sort public seeking the accoutrements of gentility. As works designed for private performance by a growing population for whom

music consumption and amateur musicianship were demonstrations of middling class socio-economic identity, songs like *The Huntsman's Delight* worked to bring traces of the public circus performances into domestic scenes of respectable sociability.

The case of “TIPPY JACK’S DESCRIPTION of DRIVING A GIG; or Young GILPIN’S Journey to Hyde Park Corner,” featured at Astley’s during the 1785 and 1787 seasons and mentioned at the outset of this article, offers an example of the way circus songs circulated amongst individuals of lower socio-economic circumstances as well. The song was connected to earlier print and performances aimed at diverse audiences, and it was also reprinted later in cheap collections of lyrics that were aimed at consumers of all levels. “Tippy Jack’s Description” was written by C. F. Barrett in response to an existing song “The Diverting History of John Gilpin” which was in circulation in both printed and performed forms. “The Diverting History of John Gilpin” was published anonymously in *The Repository, a Select Collection of Fugitive Pieces of Wit and Humour in Prose and Verse by the Most Eminent Writers* in 1777 and then, credited to William Cowper, it appeared as “The Diverting History of John Gilpin, Shewing How He Went Farther Than He Intended And Came Safe Home Again” in *The Task, A Poem, In Six Books* in 1785.⁴⁹ In the same year, it was performed at the Free-Mason’s Hall and at

⁴⁹ *The Repository* (printed for J. Dilly, 1777); William Cowper, *The Task, A Poem, In Six Books* (London: J. Johnson, 1785), 343-359. “The Diverting History of John Gilpin” was the subject of many other representations, including “John Gilpin’s Ghost” by John Thelwall (London: T. Smith, 1795).

Drury Lane.⁵⁰ Although it is impossible to find direct evidence of one influencing the other, the similarity between the story of John Gilpin and Astley's "The Taylor's Ride to Brentford," is also suggestive of the dynamic interplay between circus entertainments and works circulating in print.

The lyrics of "Tippy Jack's Description" self-consciously draw attention to the popularity of the earlier song, as the narrator, ostensibly John Gilpin's son, Jack, comments that "as papa Gilpin's journey to Edmonton has made a bit of noise, I will just give a short description of my intended trip to Brighton."⁵¹ Unlike "The Diverting History of John Gilpin," which consisted of sixty-three ballad form stanzas sung to the existing tune of "Chevy Chase," "Tippy Jack's Description" is written in jig time, and includes three verses, a nonsense chorus ("Ri um ti iddity um, &c."), and three "spoken" sections, one of which follows after each stanza. "The Diverting History of John Gilpin" concerns a tailor from Cheapside in London whose wife seeks diversion in a northern suburb of London. It mocks the aspirations of the middling sort by presenting the outcome of such desires: John Gilpin is literally diverted when his horse is startled and runs out of control, taking him on a long journey. Gilpin ends up in the place where he started, his tailor's shop, suggesting the end result of attempts to rise above one's station.

⁵⁰ *Gilpin's Rig; Or, the Wedding Day Kept, A Droll Story* (London: printed for S. Fores and F. Clarkson, 1785).

⁵¹ *The Vocal Encyclopedia; Comprising An Extensive Variety of Popular Songs, Catches, Glees, &c. Sung at Various Convivial Meetings and Places of Public Entertainments* (London: Albion Press, printed for James Cundee, 1808), 223.

Whereas Gilpin's wife attempts to conceal her aspirations, hiring a chaise but also hiding this extravagance from the neighbours, the narrator of "Tippy Jack's Description" is eager to represent himself as a seeker after fashion. He addresses his story to "ye bucks and ye blood's o' the town," indicating that his mount is a "thorough bred" and noting that when he is "fix'd in my gig" he "look'[s] the thing" Instead of heading to a suburb for supper, he intends to drive to the fashionable seaside town of Brighton. "Tippy Jack's description" comments ironically on Jack's desires to keep up with the trends of the day. But because he is riding a gig that is fashionable but not functional (hence the name "Tippy"), he is unable to keep it upright. First, his horse "t[akes] fright at the face of an old clothes-man" at the "corner of Garlic-hill," pitching Jack "into the centre of a mud cart." Then, once he is righted, his horse runs against a cart, tossing him into a fruit stall where his lower socio-economic status (as the son of a tailor) is ironically suggested when he is mistaken for "Twig the tailor" or "the barber." Next, less than one street away, he encounters another mishap when he accidentally runs over a pig and is again "bundled out of the gig" and ends up paying "two pounds sixteen shillings and three farthings" as compensation. Finally, in "touching the mare under the flank" while trying to avoid paying the turnpike at Hyde Park, he is run against the posts, endangers the lives of several pedestrians, and ends up "sprawl[ed] in the dirt." Jack's punishment ultimately proves more serious than his father's, as he causes bodily harm both to himself and to others. Although he is punished for his focus on fashion rather than safety, however, Jack's attitude to his various problems is sanguine, as after each fall, he sings his nonsense chorus. Jack's pretentiousness would have been played up in the performance

by Johannot, as he sang the song, according to the advertisement, “In Dress and Character of the present Fashion.”⁵²

“Tippy Jack” also enjoyed a robust printed afterlife in a number of cheap songsters such as *The Vocal Encyclopedia; Comprising An Extensive Variety of Popular Songs, Catches, Glees, &c. Sung at Various Convivial Meetings and Places of Public Entertainments* (1808), *The Pic-Nic, A Collection of Recitations, And Comic Songs, Toasts, Sentiments, &c.* (1816), and *The Universal Songster* (1825).⁵³ As “pocket-sized anthologies of popular song” that were “cheap, printed in large numbers and distributed far and wide,”⁵⁴ songsters performed an important role in the networks of song culture in the Romantic era. They provided inexpensive opportunities for musical entertainment for

⁵² “Reconstructing Early Circus, 26 September, 1797.

⁵³ *The Vocal Encyclopaedia; Comprising An Extensive Variety of Popular Songs, Catches, Glees, &c. Sung at Various Convivial Meetings and Places of Public Entertainments* (n.p., Albion Press, Printed for James Cundee, 1808) and *The Pic-Nic, A Collection of Recitations, And Comic Songs, Toasts, Sentiments, &c.* ed. D. Jacques (London: B. Reynolds; Chichester: D. Jacques; Norwich: J. Stacy, 1816) and *The Universal Songster; or Museum of Mirth: Forming the Most Complete, Extensive and Valuable Collection of Ancient and Modern Songs* (Printed for John Fairburn; Simpkin and Marshall; and Sherwood, Gilbert, and Piper, 1825).

⁵⁴ *Cheap Print and Popular Song in the Nineteenth Century: A Cultural History*, ed. Paul Wall, Derek Scott, and Patrick Spedding (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 1.

individuals who did not own instruments or who did not possess the ability to play them; they fueled the market for new songs by continually playing on consumers' desire for novelty; and they also self-consciously generated a nationalistic discourse of British musicality. The "Introductory Song" in *The Annual Harmony, or the Convivial Companion for 1789*, for example, describes the contemporary time period as "this song singing age,"⁵⁵ while *The Myrtle and Vine* suggests that it is "allowed by every foreigner, acquainted with our language, that Britain excels in this enchanting strain [song]" (v).

Songsters collected a wide variety of materials in one volume, aiming to deliver the greatest number and variety of songs to the consumer for the least amount of money. *The Vocal Encyclopedia*, for example, features songs about "MARTIAL, NAVAL, BACCHANALIAN, CIVIC, PASTORAL, SENTIMENTAL, and DESCRIPTIVE SUBJECTS &c. &c. &c." The editor aims to balance comprehensiveness and portability, noting that he has included both "every new and popular song which has been sung for the first time at the Theatres and Vauxhall last year" as well as "those strains which will never die" (vi) and boasting that, due to "typographical ingenuity," the collection includes in just one of its pages "more lines than any other song book of even an octavo size" (Preface v). The editor of *The Pic-Nic, A Collection of Recitations, And Comic Songs, Toasts, Sentiments, &c.*, D. Jacques, also notes the wide number of subjects addressed in the songs in his volume: "serious, descriptive, and ridiculous" (iv), suggesting that such a variety of material prevents the "reader" from either "falling into

⁵⁵ "Introductory Song" (sung to the tune "Song Upon Songs"), in *The Annual Harmony, or the Convivial Companion* (n.p., 1789).

low spirits” or having his “body weakened by too great an exertion of his risible faculties” (iv). *The Vocal Encyclopedia* begins with “The Blue-Eyed Blushing Day” as “SUNG IN ADRIAN AND ORILLA at the Theatre-Royal, Covent Garden, written by Mr. Dimond” and concludes with a number of prologues and epilogues from plays performed at the patent theatres. “Tippy Jack” appears toward the end of the work, between “THE EXHIBITOR’S CHAUNT, *Spoken and sung by Mr. Grimaldi, at Sadler’s Wells* and “THE INTRIGUING IRISHMAN.” *The Pic-Nic* also includes serious recitations from theatrical productions as well as comic fare, introducing “Tippy Jack’s Journey to Brighton” between “The Mail Coach” and, again, “The Intriguing Irishman.” By collecting pieces from both the legitimate theatres and places of illegitimate entertainment together in one volume, these songsters homogenized the landscape of song, offering materials from all musical venues for common consumption. “Tippy Jack” appears in both these songsters, however, without subtitles connecting it to its performance. While some consumers would undoubtedly have seen the song performed at Astley’s and linked the printed text to that location and to the celebrity singer, Johannot, who performed it, others would have different associations with the song, having perhaps sung in different circumstances.

In addition to being printed in numerous cheap songsters, the song of “Tippy Jack” also appeared in even cheaper form as a single slip song [Fig. 4].

Journey to Brighton.

Prints Printer, 6, Great St Andrew Street,
Seven Dials.

OH ye bucks and ye bloods of renown,
Come listen awhile unto me,
Tis my Jack O my Jack so renown
And that is young Gilpin you see.
Tis of what did betel t'other day,
To be sure 'twas only a rig,
But this I shall certainly say,
It was all along driving my gig,
(Speaks.)—And as papa Gilpin's journey to Ed-
monton has made a bit of a noise I will just give
short description of my intended journey to Brite-
ton. You must know that my filly thorough bred
in turning the corner of Garlic Hill, took fright at
the sight of an old clothes man, and without the
least ceremony pitched me plump into the centre
of a mud cart, where I began to sing—

Ram ti iddity, &c.

Well as I was once more again,
And thanks to my stars too unhurt,
and when fix'd in my gig look'd the thing
Except to nothing worse for the dirt,
My elbow'd knowingly 'squard;
and seem'd like a swallow to fly
When plump against the post went the mare,
and down again headlong went I.
(Speaks.)—Dammie I was now tossed into a high
stall, where the apples and pears rolled one way,
and I head over heels another. Twig the taylor,
says one, you die, says another, its the barber. O
thank you gentlemen, says I, its only

Ram &c,

So when the damage was paid,
Away gallop'd I out o' sight,
But scarce had another street met,
Before she again took fright,
But spanking along Piccadilly,
I somehow ran over a pig
When off set the bunch of a filly,
and bundled me out of my gig.
(Speaks.)—Oh this was not the worst job of all,
for after I had paid the butcher two pounds six
shillings and 3 pence three farthings for the loss of
his grunter, in touching the mare under the left
flank in order to avoid paying the turnpike at Hyde
Park corner, she ran me against the post, half
killed an old beggar woman upset a man
milliner smock'd the shifts in two and left me
sprawling in the dirt. Why don't you get up?
says the turnpike man. Why don't you keep
moving sir? says another. Damn you, says I,
don't you see I am moving? So now I began to
sing.

Ram ti iddity, &c.

Now a pretty rig I have play'd,
By frisking about in my gig,
an old woman frightened to death,
And likewise ran over a pig.
My shaft I have broken in two,
The shoulder of my filly out,
In a mud cart so soft I did lay,
Till the scavenger shot me out.
(Speaks.)—and all these misfortunes came by
cutting a swell and singing.

Ram ti iddity um



Slip songs consisted of lyrics printed on narrow strips of paper without musical notation. Several slip songs could be typeset using one plate, thus saving paper, then cut out separately. They were designed for wide consumption and circulation. As Oskar Cox Jensen notes, “the average labourer paid a half-hour’s wages for a sing-song slip” (26). A slip song version of “Tippy Jack” was printed by J. Davenport between 1799 and 1800 with the title “Tippy Jack's journey to Brighton,” and the lyrics for the song appeared again as a slip song between 1819 and 1844 with the title “Journey to Brighton.”⁵⁶ In the latter version, however, the song adopts a more critical perspective toward Jack. In all

⁵⁶ “Tippy Jack’s Journey to Brighton,” (J. Davenport, Sold at No. 7, Little Catherine street, Strand, 1799-1800), Broadside Ballads Online, <http://ballads.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/search/title/Journey%20to%20Brighton>, “Journey to Brighton,” (printed by Pitts Printer, 6, Great St Andrew Street Seven Dials, 1819-1844), Broadside Ballads Online, <http://ballads.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/search/title/Journey%20to%20Brighton>, and also, together with “Death of General Wolfe,” (Boston: n.p., 1810, 1814), Early American Imprints, Series II: Supplement from the American Antiquarian Society, 1801-1819, <https://www.readex.com/titlelists/title-list-early-american-imprints-series-ii-supplement-american-antiquarian-society-1801>.

previous versions, the ballad ends with Jack being accosted by two “turnpike” men, one of whom demands, “Why don’t you get up,” and the other of whom asks, “Why don’t you keep moving, sir?” Jack responds with his characteristic insouciance. Although the question of the second turnpike man was intended to urge Jack to shift himself away from the turnpike at Hyde Park Corner, Jack takes him literally, responding: “‘Damn you, says I, don’t you see I’m moving.’ So I began to sing” The later slip song, however, adds a new verse, in which Jack sums up the consequences of his actions:

Now a pretty rig I have play’d

By frisking about in my gig.

An old woman frightened to death,

And likewise ran over a pig.

My shaft I have broken in two,

The shoulder of my filly out,

In a mud cart so soft I did lay,

Till the scavenger shot me out.

(Speaks)—and all these misfortunes came by cutting a swell and singing.⁵⁷

In the slip song, the cheapest version of “Tippy Jack” in textual circulation, Jack’s song provides a more pointed social comment on the careless attitude of the social climbers

⁵⁷ “Journey to Brighton,” Broadside Ballads Online, Bodleian Library,

<http://ballads.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/static/images/sheets/10000/07314.gif>.

who “frisk” about mimicking the lifestyles of the gentry but who ultimately wreak destruction on themselves and others as they pursue pleasure. Whereas songs like *The Huntsman’s Delight* in engraved form allowed those of the middling sort singing in domestic environments to establish their social status by commenting obliquely on the aspirations of those of slightly lower standing, songs like “Tippy Jack” that existed in slip song format also allowed those at the lower end of the social scale to mock their betters.

Songs performed at Astley’s Amphitheatre as they were advertised in the newspapers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century addressed a variety of subjects. They focused on class, the role of the geographical peripheries within the British state, the relationship of Britain to the wider world, indeed anything and everything. Most importantly, for purposes of my argument, circus songs were not just performed in the circus. They circulated in formats ranging from engraved collections of music to cheap songsters and slip songs, bearing witness to their performance at the circus, but also being re-animated in private dwellings, semi-private gatherings, and on the street. As I have suggested here, an examination of songs from the circus can provide an entry point into the complexities of song culture in the Romantic era, a culture whose extensive parameters have, until recently, not have been explored as fully as they might. As multi-mediated vectors of entertainment, circus songs challenge us to consider further how works existing at the boundary of the performatic and the textual have frequently disappeared from critical view as they have fallen between disciplinary divisions. Songsters, for example, in which a number of circus songs appeared, have been

overlooked both by literary scholars as belonging to the world of music and by musicologists as consisting of textual lyrics rather than music.⁵⁸

In 2018, as part of the “Circus 250” celebrations, Phillip Astley was rediscovered by audiences in venues across Britain.⁵⁹ The Victoria and Albert Museum organized several events, including an “In Focus” tour about Phillip Astley and a conference which invited “curators, historians and circus practitioners to mark the 250 year [sic] anniversary of the world’s first circus, created by Philip Astley.”⁶⁰ In Newcastle-Under-Lyme, where Astley was raised, the New Vic Theatre presented a new play, “Astley’s

⁵⁸ In *The Social Life of Books: Reading Together in the Eighteenth-Century Home* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2017), for example, Abigail Williams does a wonderful job of exploring how texts circulate in multiple forms for a wide spectrum of social classes, but she does not consider songsters in her focus on print culture. From the musicological perspective, works like *Music in Eighteenth-Century Britain* by David Wyn Jones (London: Routledge, 2016) make no mention at all of popular collections of songsters.

⁵⁹ “About,” Circus250 – A UK-wide celebration of 250 years of circus in 2018 –, <http://circus250.com/about>.

⁶⁰ “In Focus Tour: Philip Astley,” Victoria and Albert Museum, <https://www.vam.ac.uk/event/x0bbDz05/in-focus-tour-the-roar-of-the-crowd-with-cathy-haill> and “From Waterloo to the World: 250 Years of Circus,” Victoria and Albert Museum, <https://www.vam.ac.uk/event/KpwokEpL/from-waterloo-to-the-world-250-years-of-circus>.

Astounding Adventure,” based on the life of Phillip and Patty Astley, while on Aug. 4, 2018, the town held a daylong celebration of circus arts entitled “Astleyfest.”⁶¹ This new public focus on Astley and the history of circus offers an opportunity for Romanticists to reflect on the importance of early circus. That reconsideration should include circus not just in terms of its London roots but also in the context of its transnational routes and should focus not just on the visual spectacles that were presented, but also on the sounds of the spectacles as they circulated through those routes in both performatic and textual forms.

⁶¹ “Astley’s Astounding Adventure – New Vic,” events, last modified July 14, 2018, <https://www.evensi.uk/astley-astounding-adventure-vic-theatre/255586677> and “Upcoming Events,” Philip Astley Project: Father of Modern Circus, <http://www.philipastley.org.uk/events/astleyfest-2018/>.